



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

**Meeting Minutes**  
**October 12, 2010 – 7:30pm**

### **Attendance**

*Commission Members:* Daphne Collins (Chair), Philip Plottel (Vice Chair), Jerry Adams, Matt Cuddy, Charles Eisenberg, Jane Ives, Peter Kai Jung Lew

*Staff:* Candace Havens (Interim Director, Planning and Development Department), Amanda Stout (Sr. Economic Development Planner)

*Guests:* Dean Chronopoulos, Steve Buchbinder, Bill Renke

*Absent:* Robert Gifford, Jack Leader (Secretary), John Pears, Chris Steele

### **Agenda Items**

#### **1. Bill's Pizzeria**

- The EDC invited Dean Chronopoulos, President of Bill's Pizzeria (751-753 Beacon Street) and his attorney, Stephen J. Buchbinder, to the meeting to discuss their special permit application. The EDC is interested in reviewing projects such as this one – it has officially filed for a special permit, it is a "major project," and it is located in an area of particular interest to the EDC (in this case, Newton Centre). In keeping with its charge to promote and maintain Newton businesses, the EDC review evaluates the special permit request from an economic development perspective and is additive, not duplicative, to land use and other reviews.
- Bill's Pizzeria is seeking to increase the number of seats from 33 seats to 57 seats and to increase the number of employees on the largest shift from six to nine. Mr. Chronopoulos is applying for a special permit to (1) allow a restaurant over 50 seats in a BU-1 zone and (2) waive nine required parking spaces (necessitated by the increase in seats and employees).
- Mr. Chronopoulos told the EDC about the history of the business, noting that Bill's is very active in the community and very popular. On October 31<sup>st</sup>, Bill's will sponsor its 35<sup>th</sup> annual 5k charity road race. He had a petition at the restaurant counter and had received only support from customers and neighbors.
- Bill's is open from 10am to 10pm every day, and the most crowded times are Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Mr. Chronopoulos estimated that 60% of their business is take-out or delivery. He hopes that adding more seats, particularly at 3-4 person tables, will attract more families. He noted that many people walk to the restaurant from nearby neighborhoods and that they are conducting a survey to determine the distribution of walking, cycling, driving, and carpooling.
- Mr. Chronopoulos does not do much traditional advertising, preferring to sponsor ads in school or local programs and relying heavily on word-of-mouth recognition.
- Mr. Chronopoulos noted that, in addition to property tax revenue, Bill's contributes approximately \$5,000 per month in Meals Tax revenue to the City. He rents the space from the property owner.
- The EDC members discussed parking, which is one of the primary issues concerning restaurants in Newton Centre recently. Mr. Buchbinder explained that they are doing a parking survey and offered to send the results to the EDC. He noted that other recent Newton Centre restaurants – Panera, Deluxe Town Diner, Pie – have shown that there is adequate parking in Newton Centre and have been granted special permits. EDC members noted that this will not always be the case and reiterated the need for a more comprehensive look at parking policy in



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the City in general and in Newton Centre in particular. EDC members noted that they might like to comment on a Parking In-lieu policy once it is docketed. Additionally, they noted that employee parking is a particular problem in Newton Centre that should be resolved. Mr. Chronopoulos rents a few spaces behind the restaurant for employee parking.

- The EDC members noted that seating capacity – which is directly tied both to parking spaces and to a restaurant’s revenue – is stifling businesses in Newton. They said that Mr. Chronopoulos has the space for more seats; he is only making interior and furniture changes and not expanding the square footage of the restaurant. The EDC was also dismayed to hear that Mr. Chronopoulos once had an opportunity to start another business in Newton, but decided against it since the process was too complex in Newton.
- Vote to have Daphne Collins draft a letter stating the EDC’s support for Mr. Chronopoulos’ special permit application. Motion to approve (7-0) (Plottel, seconded by Lew).

### **2. EDC Business and Updates**

- Vote on September 14, 2010 Minutes. Motion to approve (7-0) (Eisenberg, seconded by Lew).
- Carol Ann Shea’s term on the EDC has ended, and she decided to resign from the Commission rather than seek reappointment. Members noted that the EDC is in need of new members and would particularly like to see new members appointed who are business owners and connected with the business community in Newton.

### **3. Project Updates**

- Chestnut Hill Square – discussion of the project and the Public Hearing that occurred on September 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Daphne Collins said that she met with Mayor Setti Warren prior to the EDC meeting. Mayor Warren reiterated his interest in attending a future EDC meeting and noted that his priority economic development projects/areas are: Newton Centre, Austin Street, Needham Street, and Chestnut Hill Square.
- Business Improvement District (BID) exploration in Newton Centre – Daphne Collins said that the Mayor is supportive of the concept and that she and Amanda Stout will coordinate with Emmy Hahn of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Economic Development and others to schedule a meeting with Newton Centre property owners and those who have successfully started BIDs in other cities and towns in Massachusetts.
- Feasibility Analysis Working Group – group members have been working independently and have been looking at quantitative models, working on developing a methodology/template for doing this type of analytical work in the future, and thinking about both financial impact analysis and a more politically neutral cost/benefit analysis.
- Austin Street – the discussion of the surplus of the Austin Street parking lot has begun with the Ward 2 Aldermen, all of whom are in favor of moving the process forward.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout

Sr. Economic Development Planner